



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-20-95  
Meeting 20-19  
August 26, 2020

## AGENDA ITEM 4

### AGENDA ITEM

Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch Grazing Lease in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution authorizing the General Manager to enter into a new, two-year grazing lease with an option for a one-year extension at Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve with current lessee, Vince Fontana.

### SUMMARY

In November 2010, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) entered into a grazing lease at Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Lease) with Vince Fontana (Lessee). The Lease was a five-year term with one five-year extension making the final expiration date October 31, 2020. The Lessee has expressed his desire to renew the Lease. In May 2020, the District and the Lessee discussed a shorter, two-year lease term with an option for the District to extend for one additional year.

### BACKGROUND

In the late 1990s, coastal residents expressed their support for extending District boundaries to include the San Mateo County Coast, where development was beginning to threaten the area's rural character. When District boundaries expanded in 2004, a commitment was made to the Coastside community to preserve agricultural land and rural character, and encourage viable agricultural use of land resources as part the District's Coastside Mission:

*To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.*

Coastal grasslands are one of the most biodiverse and threatened ecosystems in North America, and in many cases depend on regular disturbances like grazing or fire to prevent encroachment by introduced species, shrubs, and forest. These disturbances were historically provided by wildlife herds and Native American burning practices.

Conservation grazing focuses on the use of livestock to pursue conservation goals such as native species habitat enhancement. This focus distinguishes conservation grazing from basic livestock production. The grazing plan for each property/ranch sets the management parameters to meet

resource conservation goals (such as stocking rates, class of livestock, seasonality, and duration of grazing activity). The District uses conservation grazing as a critical tool for managing approximately 8,000 acres of coastal grasslands for ecological health, biodiversity, and wildland fire safety. The District's Conservation Grazing Program is a mutually beneficial partnership with small-scale local ranchers on the San Mateo County Coast to accomplish multiple goals aligned with the District's mission.

Lobitos/Elkus lies within the Coastside Protection Area and supports the viability of conservation grazing as a resource management tool to protect critical grassland habitat and reduce fuel loads and the risk of catastrophic wildland fires.

## **DISCUSSION**

The District purchased the Elkus Uplands and Lobitos Ridge properties in August 2009 and March 2010 respectively. The Lessee held cattle grazing leases on both properties, which were assigned to the District at the time of sale. Desiring to further the conservation grazing principles as a tool for protecting critical grassland habitat and maintaining agricultural viability on the San Mateo Coast, the District approved a five-year lease with one five-year extension with the Lessee (R10-99). The Lessee, with District approval, exercised the extension in 2015. The lease terminates October 31, 2020.

In May 2020, District staff met with the Lessee to discuss the lease. District staff encouraged the Lessee to take further steps in maintaining and improving the ranch infrastructure and reminded the Lessee of their responsibility to closely observe District regulations. District staff proposed a new two-year lease with an optional one-year extension. The proposed two-year lease allows the District to work closely with the Lessee over the next two grazing seasons to ensure that District grazing management objectives and requirements are met. Depending on Lessee performance, the District will exercise its sole discretion in determining whether to extend the lease for an additional year.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Over the past five years, this Lease has provided an average annual grazing rent of \$4,000 a year. The Lessee would continue to pay an annual grazing rent to the District estimated at approximately \$5,000 per year. Annual grazing rent varies, depending upon the average selling price of beef cattle as well as the quantity and age of the cattle and the amount of time the cattle spends grazing on the property.

## **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

A Board Committee did not previously review this item.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

A Negative Declaration evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with the Rangeland Management Plan for Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch was approved in 2010 (see R-10-99). The proposed Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch Grazing Lease is consistent with the Rangeland Management Plan.

## **NEXT STEPS**

If approved, the General Manager would execute a two-year Lease with an option to extend for one additional year at the District's sole discretion with Vince Fontana (Lessee) provided the Lessee has met all District requirements, including appropriate insurance certificates and endorsements.

### Attachments:

1. Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch Location Map
2. Resolution Adopting Award of Grazing Lease to Vince Fontana (Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve)
3. Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch Lease

### Responsible Department Head:

Michael Jurich, Land and Facilities Services Manager

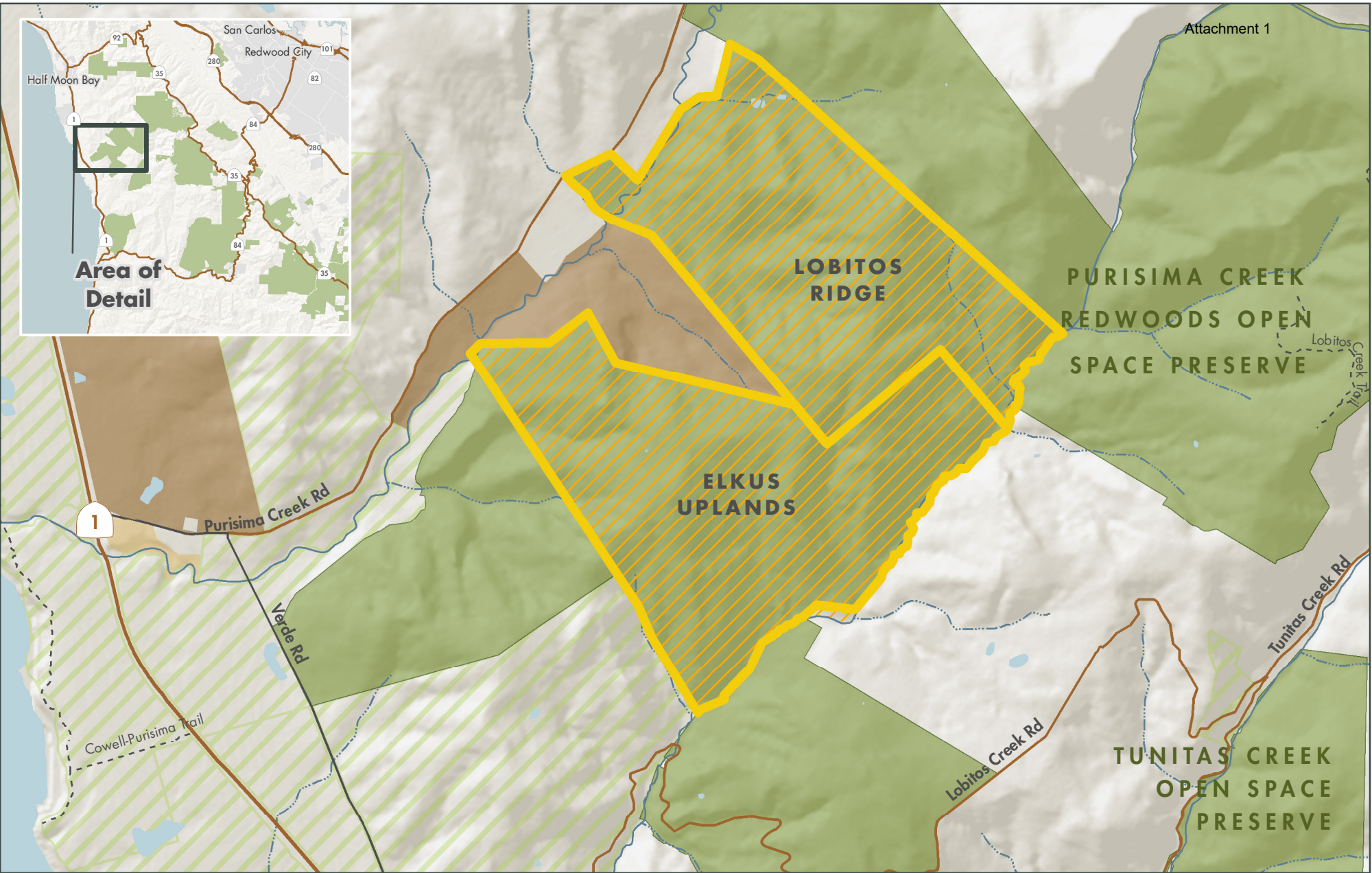
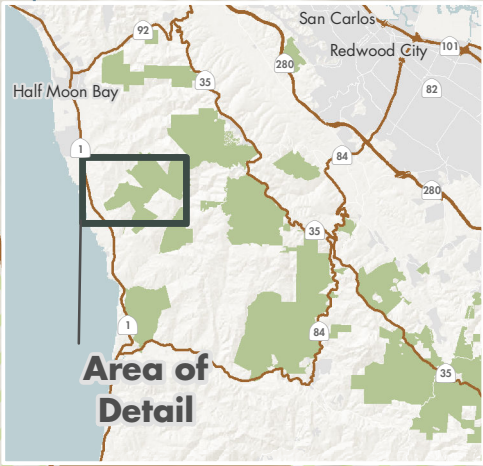
### Prepared by / Contact person:

Susan Weidemann, Property Management Specialist II

### Graphics prepared by:

Francisco Lopez-Tapia, GIS Technician,  
Information Systems & Technology

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Created By: lopez



Attachment 1

### Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Grazing Properties

-  MROSD Preserves
-  Other Protected Lands
-  Private Property
-  Other Public Agency
-  Non-MROSD Easement Over Private
-  Lobitos/Elkus Grazing Land
-  Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Ranch Property Boundaries

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
8/18/2020



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.

RESOLUTION 20-\_\_

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT APPROVING THE AWARD OF A GRAZING LEASE TO VINCE FONTANA (LOBITOS RIDGE/ELKUS UPLANDS RANCH, PURISIMA CREEK REDWOODS OPEN SPACE PRESERVE)

WHEREAS, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) may, under the provisions of California Public Resources Code section 5540, lease property owned by the District; and

WHEREAS, the lease of the Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch for grazing and range management purposes is compatible with park and open space purposes, and the lease of such premises is in the public interest; and

WHEREAS, the District wishes to lease the Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch to Vince Fontana on the terms set forth in the attached report.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District does hereby resolve as follows:

1. The Grazing Lease between the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and Vince Fontana, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference, is approved.
2. The General Manager is authorized to execute the Grazing Lease on behalf of the District. The General Manager, with the concurrence of the General Counsel, is authorized to make minor changes to the Grazing Lease that do not materially amend the terms and conditions thereof.
3. The General Manager is authorized to grant an extension of the Grazing Lease on the terms and conditions set forth in the Grazing Lease. The General Manager shall report any such extension of the Grazing Lease to the Board of Directors at the Board meeting immediately following the granting of the extension. The General Manager or designee is further authorized to sign and approve all other documents necessary or appropriate to entering into the Grazing Lease.

\* \* \* \* \*

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on \_\_\_\_\_, 2020, at a regular meeting thereof, by the following vote:

- AYES:
- NOES:
- ABSTAIN:
- ABSENT:

**ATTEST:**

**APPROVED:**

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Jed Cyr, Secretary  
Board of Directors

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Karen Holman, President  
Board of Directors

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

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Hilary Stevenson, General Counsel

I, the District Clerk of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District by the above vote at a meeting thereof duly held and called on the above day.

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Jennifer Woodworth, District Clerk